

Interagency Cooperation With Other Agencies And Entities

Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

The heart of supported employment is the coordination of the time limited and the on-going support services. The Division of Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired has been proactive in working collaboratively with service providers and public agencies to coordinate funding sources and policies. These efforts are categorized into two areas:

- Formal Cooperative Agreements
- Informal Cooperative Efforts with Agencies

Formal Cooperative Arrangements

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired have in place a formal cooperative agreement with the Divisions of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Office of Special Education, and the Department of Labor. The purpose of the cooperative agreement is to:

- define supported employment and related terms,
- eligibility requirements,
- referral process,
- responsibilities of each agency,
- extended support services to be provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities,
- extended support services to be provided by the Division of Mental Health,
- time-limited services to be provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired,
- service plan development,
- requirements for transition to extended services, and
- responsibilities for post-employment services

Having full access to the Department of Labor's Job Listing is essential to assist individuals with disabilities seek employment. The abbreviated job listings typically distributed do not provide a complete description of the job duties, name and location of employer. On January 15th, 1997 the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired entered into an on-going agreement with the Department of Labor for a representative in each District Office to have access to all the details of the job listings. This agreement provided for the arrangements to maintain confidentiality of employer listings and developed a purpose for the local DRS, SBVI and Job Service Offices to better coordinate services for individuals with disabilities.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities has entered into a letter of understanding with DRS and SBVI. This letter/agreement better defines how each agency's funding sources are coordinated in regards to the time limited and on-going support services. This agreement has had a significant impact in changing how services are provided to consumers who once lived in institutions or Intensive Care Facilities. These individuals have the most severe impediments to employment and now will be able to access DRS or SBVI funds to achieve a supported employment outcomes.

In November of 1997, a document was established to help coordinate the services and funding between the Divisions of Mental Health, Rehabilitation Services, and Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired. This document serves as a policy directive for the Community Mental Health Centers and the local Vocational Rehabilitation Offices. It provides guidance in three areas relative to providing vocational services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness:

1. What services can and should be provided by the Community Mental Health Center?
2. What services are available from Vocational Rehabilitation?
3. Which Division pays for the different services?

Informal Cooperative Arrangements With Agencies

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired are continually working collaboratively with other State agencies on a day-to-day basis to better serve individuals with disabilities. Following are some of these collaborative efforts:

- The State Offices of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired are co-located with the Divisions of Developmental Disabilities, Drug and Alcohol Abuse, and Mental Health. Our agencies can easily communicate to coordinate services between Divisions.
- There will be one staff person in each of the district offices assigned to coordination of supported employment services.
- Four of the six Division's District Offices are co-located with the local Job Service Offices and two offices are co-located with Social Services. In addition, some of the community rehabilitation programs providing services for DRS and SBVI consumers are also co-located with Job Service Offices.
- When vocational rehabilitation counselors travel, they frequently utilize offices in Job Services, Job Shops, Social Services, Court Houses, Community Rehabilitation Programs and other agencies.
- The public vocational rehabilitation agencies are working closely with all partners identified in the Workforce Investment Act to collaborate in the implementation of the new law. Staff from SBVI serve on implementation workgroups, task forces, the State Workforce Development Council and on local Workforce Development Councils.